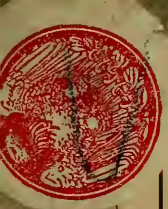

The White Flame

Luke North

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Book .B66W9
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The White Flame

THE WHITE FLAME

A PLAY BY LUKE NORTH

James H. Griffes.

The Golden Press : Los Angeles
MCMX

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Revised Author's Edition
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Luke North

PS2513
.W4
1910

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

TEACHER, guide and counselor on the Way
ALESSANDRO, a neophite and pupil
JUDITH, a virgin of the temple
ALEXANDER RELTON (Alessandro)
MRS. JULIA LISTON (Judith)
MRS. MERTON-BLAKE, patron of Egyptian archeology
JANET HARDS
DR. PLODINGER

The White Flame

ACT ONE

THE CAUSE

The Time of this Act is in the early dawn of Egypt, when the pyramids were new and human motive was little mercenary, when religion and philosophy were one and did not claim to be other than the Explanation of Life and Nature. This was before theology, when ceremonies were known to be but symbols and priests were but teachers and friendly guides on the Way.

It was a time analogous to that still earlier time in which man ceased to be Androgyne, and the De-volutionary forces were still accentuating the Separation of the sexes. Hence Asceticism was logically the way of knowledge and power.

[A time remote and a Condition now Reversed.]

The Scene is in a chamber of the Great Pyramid. A little to the right of center is an Altar on which burns steadily a Blue Flame. Back of this is an imposing entrance guarded by massive doors over which is an

intense White Light that remains very noticeable until almost the end of the scene — and finally expires. The walls and ceiling are of a polished colorless stone that readily reflects the predominating hue of the lights. A few silk-like tapestries symbolically marked relieve the bareness of the walls, and the Exits to right and to left center are closed by finely woven draperies of dull and indefinite yellowish hues that blend with and reflect the changing color tone of the room.

To the left is a large mound-like couch covered with soft textures, carelessly and loosely arranged, in hues verging from gray to almost green. It is somewhat strewn, and the ground about it, with white, yellow, and pale pink roses, and with lotus blossoms. These flowers are individually inconspicuous and in mass rather neutral of color and importance.

Extreme symplicity (but neither hardness nor bareness) distinguishes the chamber and its every appointment. At no time during this Act is there a sharp, positive color in the room.

The robes worn by the TEACHER and by ALESSANDRO are not white, but of a slightly toned yellowish gray that might be mistaken for white. The simple but ample costume of Judith is in hue a very soft but light blue. The children are garbed in soft neutral tints and shades, and of the flowers and greenery they carry none is brilliant or positive in color.

During almost the entire Act the prevailing color tone of the room is distinctly blue, like the Altar light — a diaphanous blue like summer mists between mountain ranges.

As the Curtain rises a group of garlanded children are slowly circling the Altar to decorate it with lotus blossoms and greenery. This pretty ceremony is accompanied by imposing but not solemn music and occupies the first five minutes, by which time the audience is seated, ladies have removed their hats and there is some chance of the opening lines being heard.

Right and Left are from the viewpoint of the audience.

Enter from left the TEACHER, *an elderly man, and* ALESSANDRO *his pupil, much younger, about thirty-five.*

Children finish their innocent incantations and exit to right.

ALESSANDRO (*gazing intently at the Altar*). The blue flame; is it colder than the fires of the rose?

TEACHER. Hotter, as the fire is hotter than its flame and the flame than its aura: a fiercer flame

than red or gold — tenser, deeper, a subtler blaze that burns a finer substance than does the grosser flame. It is the blue flame of mentality, the true symbol of Man.

ALESSANDRO (*musingly*). And the test is ever by fire?

TEACHER. Every test of life is a flame. Here, in this Chamber of the Blue Light, remote from the dust and moil of the world, shall fire read thy secret thoughts and yearnings.

ALESSANDRO. Of the flesh, I have none.

TEACHER. May the flame attest it.

ALESSANDRO. The flame! How shall it attest my thought?

TEACHER. This altar fire shall burn a steadfast blue that verges to a purer white, only while the human thought within its range is centered on the finer things of mind and soul — only while active thinking and those aspirations of the soul that lie beyond thought, shall prevail. Should the mind waver and emotion steal upon thee, thy lack of readiness to enter the Chamber of the White Flame shall be attested by the altar light.

ALESSANDRO. How attested, my father?

TEACHER. The flame shall change its color — from blue to gold, to rose — perchance to sputtering sodden red.

ALESSANDRO. Is this magic?

TEACHER. Magic is for children. Here we talk as men. This altar light burns from a chemical so pure, in an atmosphere so fine, that vibrations of every thought and feeling affect it. Who shall rule his mind and keep it to the diamond point of aspiration — he shall safely pass this chamber and enter the fiercer flame of the White Light.

ALESSANDRO. And this is the test of fire.

TEACHER. Every span of life is but a flame, my son, a flame to burn away the dross that hides Reality.

ALESSANDRO. What is Reality, my teacher?

TEACHER. Words but symbol it. It is the heart of the flame. In the silence of the White Chamber thou canst reach nearer the Heart and know of Reality more than words mean.

ALESSANDRO. And this flame that life is burns away the errors and missteps — consumes the

dross and pettiness of existence.

TEACHER. It is true. But there is a better truth. Life holds no dross — save for those who think it. This is truth that shall humble thee: In all the world is nothing base or mean or useless, and he who treads the Way to liberation from Rebirth shall learn to wait for the slowest traveler.

ALESSANDRO. I do not ask for what another may not have.

TEACHER. Nor can any gain that which the meanest shall not have ere life's long span of deaths and births be over. In man's Great Day on earth each soul plays every part, and learns to bare its heart to every cry of human pain or joy. Thus shall the mass attuned become, its dissonance fade, and harmony be won.

ALESSANDRO. And then?

TEACHER. Our Night of time prevails, and man goes forth in one vast group to gain his cosmic rest.

ALESSANDRO. The end of time — ?

TEACHER. Not so. For on the cosmic morrow,

in mighty caravan, the human group, now godlike in its range, betakes itself to other worlds. 'Tis profitless to think much on it — but speak not of "the end." There is no end for mind and heart that's free to soar beyond sensations' confines and reach the core of things within the flame.

* "Like a white eagle on some towering peak
Fronting the burning sun with radiant eyes,
So let thy mind to heights of knowledge rise.
When thou art hungered, flesh the curved beak
Of Meditation on wild thoughts that break
Old boundaries through. Fly thou 'neath boundless skies,
In the fierce joy of power that satisfies,
To rend and to devour, and still to seek.
Yea, let thy mind plumed with deific might,
Flashing from star to star, all worlds explore;
Reaching new realms each year with tireless flight,
Breasting deep-winged the Empyrean's purple core,
Bathed in the Sun of suns whose dazzling light
Leads thee to gaze and fly forevermore."

ALESSANDRO. My heart is lifted by the majesty of the picture.

*The lines quoted are by Alys Thompson.

TEACHER. Yet in words as blunt and bald as mother tongue may carry would I speak. Let children have their toys of metaphor and trope. Here by this flame of which thy very soul is part — which vibrates to that human part of man that spans the gulf of sleep and carries o'er from life to life — we talk as soul to soul. When you have reached the Chamber of White Fire and stand within its fusing flame, then speech within thee shall be stilled, cold reason laid aside, and thou shalt Know.

ALESSANDRO. I would enter.

TEACHER. Patience. The door of knowledge slowly turns. The White Flame but fuses and attests. Of itself it gives no knowledge. And there are distances yet to compass.

ALESSANDRO. Distances?

TEACHER. As presently you will find. A final word I'd give you now, my son. What is this that we call a Man?

ALESSANDRO. Your word I wait.

TEACHER. A compound then of Mind, Soul, and Spirit.

ALESSANDRO. The sacred triangle?

TEACHER. The triad, true, though I speak it not as sacred. No thing is sacred beyond another. All things are sacred — all and nothing. But empty sounds, to real men, are words of praise and blame.

ALESSANDRO. Some things change quicker — some last longer?

TEACHER. Yes; and of that Three which man is, the Spirit only is eternal — and Formless.

ALESSANDRO. Mind and Soul, then, have form?

TEACHER. Yes, form, though mortal eyes may not behold it. And having form they change — but slowly, slowly, lasting out the round of man's long earthly cycle on the Wheel of Rebirth. And in these forms of mind and soul there dwells the Formless Everlasting Ray that wills and works and builds from Dawn till Night, and then from Night till Dawn again, unending!

ALESSANDRO. A mighty picture. Is man so old — his world so vast?

TEACHER. That more than human which man is hath no Beginning — his world no confines.

ALESSANDRO. Of man's form and flesh thou sayest but little, my teacher.

TEACHER. Have we not done with these? Man 's not his form, nor yet the wild emotions that control and e'er destroy it. Man is that trinity which intermittently reclothes itself in denser form. This form man changes as the outer man puts off and on his coat.

ALESSANDRO. This change — this change that men call death —

TEACHER. Is but life's Longer Sleep.

ALESSANDRO. To die then is to fall asleep, and wake again in some new form?

TEACHER. In some new *human* form. Man does not sink beneath his own estate, to enter forms of animals, as some who reason not nor see the Way of Things have said.

ALESSANDRO. But in this Longer Sleep we lose the memory of daylight happenings.

TEACHER. Of daylight's petty, fleeting happenings. We do not carry to deep sleep ephemeral things of the external world.

ALESSANDRO. And so the loves and friendships

of a life must end with death? And friends and lovers know each other not upon the new life's morrow?

TEACHER. Why, that is as it may be. If friends and lovers know each other but by the garb they wear, then with the change of garb must recognition cease.

ALESSANDRO. But bonds that reach beneath the flesh and form — ?

TEACHER. May yet not rest upon more lasting base than the emotions. These ever change and fade: It is their nature.

ALESSANDRO. There may be stronger bonds?

TEACHER. There are. And bonds that bind Reincarnating Souls outlast the sleep of many Nights of life and stretch into eternity.

ALESSANDRO. But we forget. Is there no sleep without the loss of memory?

TEACHER. Relatively none, since memory is but the holding fast of things external and ephemeral. But there is sleep without the letting go of life, and they who pass into the White Flame shall learn to draw the Shroud of Change

about them, nor lose the thread of life. Who conquers mind and makes it servant to the Will — he hath conquered death.

ALESSANDRO. 'Tis at this door I knock. That gulf of passing consciousness I'd bridge, and live with those high souls who keep the knowledge of the Way of Things from time's corrupting hand.

TEACHER. The fire shall test thee — fire that runs from youth's red blaze of passion to fiercest flames of white.

ALESSANDRO. Men have worshipped fire.

TEACHER. And still do worship it. But few have sought the heart of fire. Men live in the flame and the flame consumes.

ALESSANDRO. Fire — vibration —

TEACHER. Vibration is but the flame. Wouldst reach the heart beyond the flame?

ALESSANDRO. It is the goal for which I search. Have I lagged, father, when thou hast led?

TEACHER. Not so, my son. 'Tis time that thou shouldst lead . . . . And the way is dark —

ALESSANDRO. But I shall have thy hand to grasp —

TEACHER. Not so. . . . We part.

ALESSANDRO. Say you we must part?

TEACHER. 'Tis so; for none may lean or follow on the Way, but each must find it for himself — alone.

ALESSANDRO. I yet shall have the light of thy guidance. The years I've sat to thy hand, the wisdom fallen from thy lips shall light the Way for me.

TEACHER. Yet shall the Way be dark, my son, all dark, save for the Light Within. All outward fire is but the test. The light that guides shines from the heart — the light that links the outer form with the lasting man, the fleeting with the Real; this Light alone can lead.

ALESSANDRO. I have no fear, father.

TEACHER. And when the Way is darkest, say to thyself, "I have no fear." To those who have no fear no harm can come.

ALESSANDRO. Than fear, is there no other danger?

TEACHER. None. But thou shalt meet delays. None shall escape the Wheel of Rebirth, nor

reach to Nature's Inmost secrets and pay but half the price.

ALESSANDRO. I'll not complain.

TEACHER. I believe thee. For ten years hast thou lived well the life, and earned thy every step. Has the path seemed long?

ALESSANDRO. I have not measured time. I came to you when days were dark, and wild emotions tore the flesh. Wrenched from a soul that was to me life's counterpart, these silent chambers gave me peace. I bowed — and ceased to feel. The flesh I have not conquered, but forgot, and you have opened fairer visions to my inner sight than I had known could be. For every rose of life I've scorned a fairer bloom I've found.

TEACHER. And spilled the withered flowers in reaching for the new. Thou hast learned that the way of form is change.

ALESSANDRO. But I have not forgotten the essence of the Rose that thralled my soul and senses. Why was it torn away?

TEACHER. Life's test to sift the real from the

fleeting — the essence from the bloom, the spirit from the form. Men rage because the way of life is thus and so, because they may not woo the form and win the essence — nor eat their sweets and have them.

ALESSANDRO. I have sought the essence.

TEACHER. And thou shalt find. It will bloom for thee anew. Joy comes in cycles. What has been will be again. Cycles of heat and cold and joy and pain now rule man's life, till he shall learn to fix his heart on that which changes less; till he shall learn to welcome joy and turn deaf ear to grief's commotion. But thou, Alessandro, hast not set heart upon the Bowl of her you lost — or this fine flame would register thy pulse-beats and turn to rose or sodden red.

ALESSANDRO. I drank a deeper draft than lips of flesh may taste. I asked of life — perhaps too much.

TEACHER. None ask too much, and many ask too little, content with husks and flowers that wither ere they be fairly plucked. But thou shalt drink again. There comes a time — when man's

return to Cosmic Night begins and souls do blend again — when separated Rays unite, and each soul finds its counterpart.

ALESSANDRO. That time! — is long —

TEACHER. There is no time.

ALESSANDRO. No time?

TEACHER. 'Tis all an everlasting Now. At heart of Nature there's no measuring of hours. Time's at the rim of life, and all that was or shall be lies focused at the core of Things. Time measures flesh. But now I go — farewell!

ALESSANDRO. My guide, my friend — oh! more than father you have been to me. And shall we meet again?

TEACHER. Beyond all doubt. Such bond as ours is not so lightly broken. When the White Flame beams upon thee, it shall reveal my outstretched hand. I go. Thy test, the flame — may it waver not.

ALESSANDRO. Farewell, beloved teacher. I'll hail thee soon.

TEACHER. In the White Flame we meet.

They part. *Exit* TEACHER.

ALESSANDRO (*slowly and meditatively going to couch upon which he rests, gathering poise before essaying to enter the chamber of the White Flame*). I'm calm. My mind obeys the will. . . . The flame burns steadily. Peace is with me. What knowledge waits within? . . . I'll go. (*Half rising — chant of woman's voice is heard.*) That voice! I've heard it in the deeps of silence, in night's profoundest hours — and learned to drive it 'neath the pulsing flesh and all its vast emotions. 'Tis a sound beyond these ears to hear, a chord that vibrates in a subtler world than this. I've felt its strength. Its cadences now guide my steps to the Portal. (*Rises, abstractedly — chanting grows stronger — he walks slowly toward the Altar, his gaze fixed on the portal of the White Flame.*) The peace and the strength of our love, Judith! (*Woman enters from right, veiled — advances softly toward Altar. He advances slowly, not seeing her. Chanting has ceased. Unconsciously they approach each other.*) I walk as on air. Her spirit leads me. Judith.

They are now quite close and feel the presence

of each other, though her gaze is fixed intently upon the Altar and he sees only the White Flame. Both pause.

ALESSANDRO (*now turns*). Ah! . . . (*softly*) Judith! . . .

JUDITH. I am Judith (*throws aside veil*).

ALESSANDRO. And here! What tricks, what luring dreams of paradise and glory, do the senses lay before me now?

JUDITH. Alessandro! It is a vision, but fairer than I'd ever hoped to see with eyes of flesh!

ALESSANDRO. 'Tis she! Judith! my life!

JUDITH. O, what strange joy is this? Can dead men walk in holy places?

ALESSANDRO. Judith, the breath of life is in me. Our love — ah, this is all a dream, I think: then let us dream it out!

JUDITH. And pray to wake no more. . . . No, no, you must not touch me. I'm sacred to the flame; my life is sworn to chastity. I could not bear your touch.

ALESSANDRO. 'Tis but a dream, Judith, a midnight charm of heavenly fancy. We'll waken

soon enough. Let's lose no instant of its joy, but treasure with a miser's care each faintest throb. Eternity were not full pay for instants of thy love! Judith, hast thou forgotten?

Altar flame wavers and slowly turns to gold, diffusing the room with golden light.

JUDITH. Forgot! Alessandro! thee — forgot? When earth forgets the sun — and roses drink no morning dew — thy kisses I'll forget! . . . Yet, am I sacred to the flame, my life's foresworn. I must not dream! . . . And you — ?

ALESSANDRO. I seek the Way of Light — and — sweet God! I've found it in your eyes! Worlds were between us — I thought thee dead. It was a lie to part us, a trick of life to make me earn you!

Both irresolute. He clasps her. She struggles faintly. Altar light turns to pale rose — light in room grows dim. He bears her to couch.

JUDITH. They told me you were slain in the war. . . . No, no, this must not be! The flame —!

ALESSANDRO. It is! I only know it is! And were there worlds of glory slipping from my

grasp, in thy dear eyes are fairer worlds!

The rose tint of the Altar Flame deepens. The White Light fading.

JUDITH. The flame — it darkens! Ah! a brighter light I see! But thou — one kiss! . . . Oh, leave me now. I'll follow thee to other worlds than flesh; when our two souls may blend. My light — and life! . . . Go, while yet the White Flame burns!

ALESSANDRO. There is no whiter light than thy pure soul, and in its glow my spirit shall be wrapt!

White light over portal expires — room is in darkness save for deepening rose glow of Altar light.

JUDITH. Alessandro, my heart!

ALESSANDRO. Judith! there is no light but you!

The rose hue of the Altar light deepens as the Curtain descends.

END OF FIRST ACT

The Second Act

ACT TWO

THE EFFECT

The Time is modern.

The Scene is in the Egyptian room of a luxurious home whose hostess, MRS. MERTON-BLAKE, is a famous collector of Egyptian relics.

The stage is set as in Act I, except that to left, in place of the garlanded couch, are several tiers of chairs reaching back into a smaller room that lends itself on occasion, in connection with the Egyptian room, to an assembly hall in which MRS. BLAKE is wont to entertain her friends with parlor talks by notable persons of advanced ideas.

There has just been such a gathering to hear an address on Reincarnation by ALEXANDER RELTON, and as the curtain rises MRS. BLAKE is bidding adieu to a few belated auditors.

In the room also are JANET HARDS, spinster, spectacled, usually knitting, confirmed materialist, companion of MRS. BLAKE, familiarly known and loved by everybody — wearing a gauze-like shawl that resembles the veil of Judith's in Act I; and DR. PLOD-

INGER, who has come to think that Reincarnation explains Things.

On the Altar, as in Act I, is a Blue Flame giving its tone to the light of the room, and over the imposing entrance back of the Altar is the same strong White Light.

The lights do not waver or change as in Act I, being merely replicas of the ancient symbols.

Mrs. BLAKE (*shaking hands with several departing guests*). I'm so sorry things turned out as they did.

GUEST. We enjoyed your discourse very much, Mrs. Blake.

2d GUEST. Yes, indeed — perhaps as much as we should have enjoyed hearing Mr. Relton.

3d GUEST. How unfortunate that he should have been taken ill so suddenly.

Mrs. BLAKE. I regret it exceedingly, friends, I assure you, and I know Mr. Relton is greatly distressed over his failure this evening.

A GUEST (*as they are going out*). I am sure we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Following departure of Guests servants slowly and noiselessly remove chairs and place a couch

left, making the room still further resemble itself in Act. I.

DOCTOR. He was not physically ill, I think, Mrs. Blake?

JANET. Too much head work.

Mrs. BLAKE. No, he was not physically ill, doctor — nor is his trouble mental, as you suppose, Janet.

JANET. Is this more mystics, Sara?

Mrs. BLAKE. You may call it that, or anything. Names don't count. But I must tell you about Alexander. You saw him turn pale as he looked about in this room —

DOCTOR. Why, he staggered — almost fell as he stood before this ghostly relic.

JANET. And he left your assembly without a word — almost rude, I thought — but he is a good sort at heart, I am sure, Sara?

Mrs. BLAKE. Doctor — Janet — I have a suspicion — but let me think it out a little first. (*Observes that servants have finished arranging room.*) There, as the room is now arranged, it almost exactly duplicates the chamber in the

Pyramid from which these relics were taken.

JANET. How do you know that, Sara?

Mrs. BLAKE. I was there with the exploring party, my dear, and we took a flashlight of the room before dismantling it.

DOCTOR. And these lights — ?

Mrs. BLAKE. One doesn't study these things for years without learning something. They complete the picture now, but for the ancients they played deeply significant parts and were of practical use. . . . Now, I am wondering . . . could Alexander have seen this altar and its light — this very room — before?

DOCTOR. How impossible, since he has only just returned from his long visit to India, and you have had these relics but a few weeks.

JANET. Why, what *are* you thinking of, Sara? You didn't even have an Egyptian room when Mr. Relton lived here.

Mrs. BLAKE. Oh, I mean — yes, you are going to laugh at me — I mean could he have seen them in times past, in other ages — but there, I have said so much, I must say more.

DOCTOR. Do, by all means. I will try to keep Janet quiet, and I — well, I have ceased to laugh at things merely because they are outside my experience.

JANET. You can't laugh; you're too old. But I'll be still. Tell us, Sara.

Mrs. BLAKE. Alexander's mother married a New Yorker who spent much of his time in India — had an estate, or something, at Adyar. Alexander was born, and his father died there.

DOCTOR. Was the son educated in India?

Mrs. BLAKE. Partly there, and partly in this country. His mother was my distant cousin, but closest friend. When she came to live here with me, in the early days of her widowhood, our old time friendship grew more intimate. Now come close and listen: Alexander was a peculiar child. He had visions and such. All through his boyhood he talked of strange things, of things he had seen and known before he was born.

JANET. Umph! He needed exercise.

Mrs. BLAKE. And in his wandering talks he often spoke the name of a woman or girl — Ju-

dith, I think it was — whom he sought as a playmate. His poor mother worried over this a great deal, but his father, who was a student of the Eastern philosophies, rather encouraged the boy, and said his vagaries were the dim recollections of past incarnations, the memory of events and experiences of former lives.

JANET. Poor woman — husband and son both crazy!

DOCTOR. Oh, not so crazy, perhaps. Anyway, Janet, I promised that you would keep still.

JANET. But I can't when such folly is taken so seriously.

DOCTOR. I don't see much folly in this. Such things do happen. I have met similar cases in my practice.

JANET. What did you prescribe — belladonna, or morphine?

DOCTOR. I listened and tried to learn something.

Mrs. BLAKE. Now, Janet.

JANET. Oh, I'm all attention. It really is interesting.

DOCTOR. Do you mean to connect these childhood visions with the occurrence of this evening, Mrs. Blake — his all but fainting as he entered this strange, weird room of yours?

MRS. BLAKE. Of course, Doctor, I am only guessing. Suppose this room and its ancient trappings suggested a former and a similar scene to him. This room just as it is now furnished was an Inner Chamber of a school of life and philosophy. The mysteries of life and death, the plan of nature, and the course of evolution were taught in these secret halls of the Pyramids.

DOCTOR. There were great Adepts in those days, it is said.

JANET. What is that, Doctor — an Adept?

DOCTOR. One who has kept still and listened for a good many ages, until he has learned a great deal more than some noisy people ever will.

MRS. BLAKE. Don't be so hard on Janet, Doctor.

DOCTOR. I feel responsible for her. All her materialism she imbibed out of the books I am now regretful of having written.

JANET. The conceit!

Mrs. BLAKE. Some of us learn as we grow older.

JANET. Umph. They need to.

Mrs. BLAKE. I think even Janet could learn from Alexander Relton. He has made the subject of Reincarnation a life study, and the reasonable and simple way in which he presents it is very convincing. There, that's his footstep. (*Enter* ALEXANDER, *averting his gaze from altar.*) I'm so glad you feel well enough to rejoin us, dea — (*correcting herself — but* JANET *notices*) — to rejoin us, Alexander.

ALEXANDER. Oh, I wasn't ill, dear Mrs. Blake — and Miss Hards — Doctor (*bowing to them, taking hostess' hands frankly*).

DOCTOR. Not seriously, at any rate, I hope.

ALEXANDER. An emotional derangement, I should call it, Doctor. And I am heartily ashamed of it. (*Looks fearlessly toward Altar, but quavers a little.*) I feel that I owe you all a sincere apology. It was a weak, childish thing. I can scarcely understand my own weakness, and certainly not excuse it.

Mrs. Blake (*significantly*). It was something far stronger than a passing emotion, Alexander. Come, tell us about it. We are all comrades here.

Alexander. No, seriously, Mrs. Blake, I can't explain it any other way than as emotional — well, shall I say, insanity?

Doctor. With the same seriousness and frankness, Alexander, I should not call it insanity.

Alexander. But my mental processes were entirely inactive. Indeed, that was my fault. The mind should have been held to its post of duty. When the mind is lax all sorts of curious things creep into one's life.

Mrs. Blake. But there are things — forces, events, beyond the control of the mind, Alexander, are there not?

Alexander. Undoubtedly, as you women know better than men, but I am skeptical of my own present power to reach them. We live in an intellectual age. We worship reason, and I think we must prove all our knowledge by reason.

Mrs. Blake. But your experience when you first entered this room — Is it painful for me to recall it?

ALEXANDER. I have scarcely tried to account for it on other than emotional grounds. I have no other clew — the blue air here, the strange yet familiar room — the dreaminess of the scene as I first entered — it stirred deeply — I had seen it before — oh, what do I say? — I don't know — I haven't reasoned it out yet — I am not reasonably sure of anything, sometimes.

Mrs. BLAKE. Nor will reason alone ever enable you to be sure of anything, Alexander.

DOCTOR. It rather proves things to us, I think. I would certainly repel any idea or feeling that I could not rationalize.

ALEXANDER. That is the way I feel about Reincarnation, Doctor. Personal experience and intuitions are valueless as proof save to the individual who may have experienced them, and in my own case, at least, I distrust them all unless I can rationalize them.

JANET. You don't mean to say you can rationalize this idea of Reincarnation, do you, now?

DOCTOR. She was quiet for a long while.

ALEXANDER. If I could not reason it out step by step I certainly would not advocate it as a

solution of the problems of life, however much I might privately hold to it.

DOCTOR. Nothing else seems to explain life.

Mrs. BLAKE. Life is but a hideous nightmare for the millions if Reincarnation is not true. O, when I think of its terrible inequalities, its crimes, its prisons, its slums, and its palaces —

JANET. You are ready to take wings and fly away with your Reincarnation notions.

Mrs. BLAKE. It is you materialists who would fly from the world and its troubles, instead of remaining here and helping to right them. You and the Christians propose to go away from earth for ever at the end of seventy years or so.

DOCTOR. Yes. The Christian spends his eternity in heaven or in hell, and the materialist spends his in the dreamless sleep of the grave.

ALEXANDER. Both ideas are essentially the same. Modern materialism echoes the old Christian theology in declaring that man is only a transient guest on this earth, that he comes here at birth, remains for a few years, and then goes away for ever.

DOCTOR. And that is why earth is the hell of turmoil and misery that it is. Man's treasures are laid away somewhere else, and where his treasures are there is his heart.

ALEXANDER. When the rational side of Reincarnation is thoroughly understood by you social reformers (*to* JANET) and men realize that this earth is their permanent home for many, many ages, then we will see more serious and united efforts made toward bettering its conditions. Paradise is not entirely a dream, but a true symbol of a social state that shall one day exist on this earth —

JANET, *who has been bending over her knitting, shrugs her shoulders derisively — then becomes interested, sits back and raises her glasses above her eyes.*

Mrs. BLAKE. When the heart and mind are really focussed upon this earth, instead of some distant sphere.

JANET. Oh, shucks! children. When you're dead you're dead all over. I've seen many a corpse. . . . Where *did* I put my glasses?

(*searching for spectacles.*) Now, if we have lived before why don't we remember it?

DOCTOR (*taking glasses from her forehead and handing them to her*). Here are your glasses, Janet, and here is the answer to your question why we don't remember. Why didn't you remember where you put your glasses?

JANET. I was thinking of a man, I suppose. You were talking. Tell me, why didn't I remember?

DOCTOR. Because your mind was on something else. We remember that upon which the mind is centered. We don't recall our former lives because from infancy our minds are centered upon the petty details of this life.

Mrs. BLAKE. Well, I think some people remember some things (*with a glance to Alexander*).

ALEXANDER. It may be, Mrs. Blake; but it is improbable in our materialistic times, and certainly unreliable as proof of the fact of Reincarnation.

DOCTOR. But you don't deny the possibility?

ALEXANDER. No; many improbable things happen continually.

DOCTOR. Or that two people could recognize each other, from some strong attachment in a former life — ?

ALEXANDER. Why, nothing is impossible. But they would hardly recognize each other from any physical recollection, for surely the bodies in which they reside must be greatly dissimilar to those of a previous life.

DOCTOR. Well, not so greatly, perhaps. There would be characteristics, even mannerisms, carried over — and then such a recognition, if it occurred, would not be physical. We *feel* each other. We instinctively like or dislike this or that person we meet for the first time.

ALEXANDER (*speaking rather abruptly*). Oh, if an attachment in one life were founded on something more than a surface affection. If a love or a friendship were much deeper than the physical, if it existed on a more lasting plane than that of sensation — affection, or emotion — if it were rooted in the reincarnating natures of

them — if it were a friendship or a love of the soul — why, it would carry over. It does, I am sure. And no doubt we in this room are drawn together by some such pre-existing bond.

JANET. How delightful! Then we are all soul affinities.

Mrs. BLAKE. Horrors! I hope not — not since the newspapers have got hold of the word and degraded a term that really was expressive of something more than a physical passion.

ALEXANDER. Well, I am going back to the library now, good people. I only came downstairs because I felt I owed you all an apology for my rudeness.

Mrs. BLAKE. We knew it was unintentional, Alexander.

DOCTOR. I'll go with you, old man. Au revoir, ladies.

As the two men go out ALEXANDER *deliberately stares at Altar, hesitates a moment — is almost overcome — controls himself, and goes slowly out after* DOCTOR.

Mrs. BLAKE. There's something very deep in

all this, Janet. Alexander is mentally a very strong man. I wish I could remember more of his youthful wanderings . . . (*softly*) this Judith!

JANET. Oh, you remember enough of them, dear. Come back to earth now. He looks much better and stronger since his return. And he's so convincing in his manner — I could almost believe him. . . . Do you know, Sara, dear (*putting arms about her*), there are times when I think you are almost sane!

Mrs. BLAKE. Janet, you're going to say something that you ought n't to.

JANET. I'm going to say that you are in love with Alexander, and —

Mrs. BLAKE (*unconvincingly*). Why, Janet, how absurd.

JANET. And you are not to deny it — to me, dear, because I know.

Mrs. BLAKE. Why, I'm almost as old as his mother would have been!

JANET. And you would like to remember yourself as his mythical "Judith" — and you would

have done so long ago if you were not so distressingly honest with yourself.

Mrs. Blake. You're imagining things, dear.

Janet. No, I'm a sign reader — that's all.

Mrs. Blake. Isn't he fine?

Janet. If I were silly like *some* people I think I could fall in love with him myself. And if I did, do you know what I'd do?

Mrs. Blake. No; tell me.

Janet. I'd just go and get him. He's helpless. Every man is.

Mrs. Blake. Don't say any more, dear. Let me dream a bit.

Janet. I wonder why Julia was not here this afternoon. She is far too sensible to take all this kind of talk seriously.

Mrs. Blake. What kind of talk, Janet?

Janet. Oh, all this talk about leaving one's body instead of just calmly dying in the good old-fashioned way.

Enter Julia Liston. *She stops at threshold to throw aside wrappings . . . stares as one dazed. Tries to speak and cannot.*

Mrs. BLAKE. Oh, there you are. You are almost late, Julia.

JULIA. O — I — (*faints: is carried to lounge at left. Recovers quickly, but talks wanderingly*). I thought you dead, Alessandro. . . . leave me. . . . I am wedded to the flame. O! . . . this is still the dream — Alessandro! (*mild hysterics for a moment — then calms and completely responds to the ministration of the two ladies.*)

Mrs. BLAKE. Whatever is the matter, dear?

JULIA. Just a sudden dizziness, I think.

JANET. No such thing. It's that old Altar and these queer trappings here. They're enough to give anyone the willies.

Mrs. BLAKE. Janet!

JANET. Oh, they are. And you are not the first to see them and then go into —

Mrs. BLAKE. Now, Janet, be still!

JULIA. I am tired — may I go and lie down a bit?

Mrs. BLAKE. Indeed you must, dear. Dinner won't be ready for an hour yet. Janet, please, you take her upstairs (*to* JANET *aside*), and not

a word of this afternoon. Keep her mind off the subject.

JANET. You dear thing; come along now. It's just a rest you want before dinner. (*Throws her shawl over* JULIA.)

JULIA (*quite weak, but smiling*). I feel as if I could never want to eat again. You know I walked so much today. I am quite weak (*evidently unwilling to admit the real cause of her faintness.*) *Both exit.*

Mrs. BLAKE. What *does* this all mean? I seem to be on the verge of a precipice down which my entire household is to topple . . . Julia thus affected by these relics! What can it mean? Oh, I am the most unfortunate of women to be the innocent cause of so much distress . . . Can it be? . . . She and Alexander! . . . No, no — that is romance . . . possibility, not realization in our prosaic lives. Because a thing might happen — because I know that loves and friendships do outlast this Longer Sleep we call death . . . Is she? . . . they two! . . . then — is my — dream over? (*Enter* JANET) Her strange words

— "I am wed to the Light — "

JANET. It's a Red Light that she is wed to, I'll be bound.

Mrs. BLAKE. What do you mean, Janet?

JANET. Just about what I said, Sara. A shining light in the Red Light district — if the half they say of him be only half true.

Mrs. BLAKE. Oh, you mustn't say such things, Janet.

JANET. Of course I don't, only to you, Sara.

Mrs. BLAKE. It is not for you or me to judge.

JANET. Oh, I don't know — don't *know*. If it is for her to bear, it is for me to speak my mind about it.

Mrs. BLAKE. But not too loud — the servants —

JANET. Shucks! There isn't a servant on the avenue that doesn't know all about it. Why doesn't she get a divorce?

Mrs. BLAKE. The publicity — the newspapers — the scandal of it all! And only a few years ago it was a love match. He was so devoted; a little wild — but, oh, what the years do bring!

JANET. They were soul affinities — I guess not. She'd better brave the scandal and publicity and have done with it all. I'd show him if I were in her shoes.

Mrs. BLAKE. But Julia is a woman, dear — just a woman, a woman clear through. You and I are part men, I sometimes think. At any rate we have the masculine attitude of mind. We can go out and fight our way in the world. Julia is different. She would rather relinquish it.

JANET. And she runs a good chance of doing it, at this rate. Whatever *can* be the matter with her? She's completely upset by this room and its outlandish trappings.

Mrs. BLAKE. Could it be that this scene awakens ancient memories in her, too? Janet, dear, life has some order and meaning, even to you, hasn't it? It isn't all but a jumble of coincidences — is it?

JANET. Oh, I'm almost ready to admit anything, Sara — even a personal God. I wish there was one. I'd ask him to be good to Julia Liston. She's the mustard, now, isn't she?

Mrs. BLAKE. Where do you get your strange slang, Janet? . . . But we must see about the dinner. Come . . . Oh, at dinner they will meet!

Both exit.

Enter JULIA (*shawl about shoulders*). I could not rest . . . I must see this place again, it has a strange fascination for me . . . it draws my life back, back — to what I know not . . . This altar, its blue flame! Oh, what vague but real pictures do I see! . . . I feel as though I were thousands of years old . . . as though I were not encumbered with this body and its coarse demands . . . Oh, I love this room — this altar — these surroundings (*is walking slowly about Altar — looks toward lounge — stops*) Ah! (*confused, amazed, delighted with whole scene — finds words incapable of expressing her feelings. Involuntarily she puts the shawl over head and stands near the Altar as in Act I.*)

Enter ALEXANDER. I must see this room alone. What strange emotions it awakens in me! Are they only emotions? Have I reached no further into life than to be swayed and torn by emotions?

. . . One might tell *himself* the truth, perhaps — and the truth is I have stood at this altar before. Its blue flame has registered my calmness . . . Yes — yes — I recall — and the flame wavered and turned to rose! . . . Did it sputter out, I wonder? And the White Flame . . . Ah! 'twas only yesterday . . . I have been asleep — I have dreamed . . . Time, thou art a cheat. And Judith, Judith . . . O, my Teacher, I can not enter the White Flame alone! Judith! I have searched the world for you! — the White Flame beckons us. . . . O, this strange confusion of the dream! Here we met by this altar (*turns to couch*) Judith! — here we left the White Flame and went back to the walks of men! Judith, you went from me to find the Grail! . . . But we shall find it together! . . . You are near me . . . Judith! (*turns*)

JULIA. I am Judith — who calls? (*unveils*) Alessandro!

ALEXANDER. Judith! (*They are face to face, as in Act. I. Silence for a moment.*) This is not dreaming — this is reality! Judith, did we sin?

I cannot think so — but we have wandered far.

JULIA. Alessandro, my life! I am waking from a nightmare. This is the real.

Both seem dazed — they are living in the past, oblivious to the interval of time.

ALEXANDER. Have we been apart? . . . Judith, I have waited for you — how long I don't know — is it centuries or only moments? . . . These intervening dreams were interminable. (*Takes her by the hand and leads her to couch.*) I dreamed of Persia — and you were there. Oh, the dreams come back! In later Egypt we walked hand in hand — in Athens we wooed and wed each other. . . . What dreams, what dreams come tumbling now from caverns of the past! What dreams — to mystify — no, to explain this moment. And our bond — is it less?

JULIA. It could not be more, Alessandro. It is the same. We both seek the White Flame — let us go. (*They rise as if to go to door over which is the White Light.*)

Enter Mrs. BLAKE (*in doorway of White Flame.*) Judith — your husband is here.

JULIA (*with great struggle coming back to the present*). My husband! Oh, which is the dream and which the waking?

ALEXANDER (*dismayed*). Judith, did I hear aright? Your —

JULIA. Yes, dear . . . but don't speak it.

Mrs. BLAKE (*holding door open for* ALEXANDER *and motioning him toward her*). I could not stop him, Julia. He is tipsy — he is coming here.

JULIA. No, no; don't let him come in this room. I will go.

ALEXANDER (*about to pass out through door of White Light, halts*) No; it is but an empty symbol now — in this part of our dream (*looking intently at Light*), but I will not enter it alone. (*Retraces steps and goes out through door with* JULIA, *who is going to left. They pause in doorway. He raises her hand to his lips.*) *They exit in opposite directions.*

Mrs. BLAKE (*with bowed head at Altar*). Life's tragedy!

END OF SECOND ACT

The Third Act

ACT THREE

ADJUSTMENT

Time — A few hours later than preceding Act — toward early morning.

Scene — The same. As the Curtain rises the room is in darkness save for dim light from a street lamp whose rays cross the hallway in the rear and penetrate faintly the Egyptian room through partly drawn curtains of left upper entrance.

MRS. BLAKE and JULIA enter, both in dressing gown and slippers, with hair loosely arranged as for the night. MRS. BLAKE carries a taper with which she ignites the Blue Flame on the Altar.

JULIA'S loosely flowing robes very closely resemble those worn by her in the First Act.

Both women carry a bed covering with which MRS. BLAKE proceeds to improvise a bed for JULIA on the couch.

Mrs. Blake (*giving final touches to improvised bed*) — There, my dear, you will sleep as soundly, and dream as fantastically, as in your own room.

Julia *has been standing silently at the Altar.*

Mrs. Blake *comes and leads her to couch.*

Julia (*sitting on couch*). Am I very silly, dear, to want to sleep in this room — just this once? In the morning my dreams will be over and I shall go back to the old life that now seems so unreal — or else —

Mrs. Blake. Or else — What is the alternative, my dear?

Julia. The prince of my dreams will come and carry me away.

Mrs. Blake. Alexander?

Julia. So runs my dream.

Mrs. Blake. May all your dreams come true, Julia (*stroking her hair*). Now I am going to leave you. Shall I lock the door?

JULIA. Why?

Mrs. BLAKE. He might come here.

JULIA. And you would lock him out — and spoil my dream!

Mrs. BLAKE. But think, dear, this is impossible — you are scarcely acquainted.

JULIA. You are wrong, Sara; I have known him all my life, and in many lives before.

Mrs. BLAKE. Yes, in other lives; it seems true: but now — in this life . . . ?

JULIA. He came to me out of the ideal world — where there is no time, Sara. Though but an hour ago we knew each other's touch for the first time in this life, always have we known each other in the real world — always!

Mrs. BLAKE. This is a wonderful tale, Julia, wonderful and beautiful, as your own sweet self has always been to me. . . . And you are the woman of his dreams . . .

JULIA. His dreams?

Mrs. BLAKE. I knew his mother: she told me much . . .

JULIA. Oh, he has dreamed . . . as I have dreamed . . . it must be so, for we have been together . . .

Mrs. BLAKE. Do you remember him vividly from the past, from a time that is really remote, Julia?

JULIA. From a past so remote I cannot calculate it — yet a past that seems more close and real than yesterday. In many times and nations we have been together in the Daylight of life, and always in those intervals of Night that men call death. I have borne him sons and daughters. We have lived and died together — and suffered and enjoyed, as men and women do — but these were incidents. The great fact of my life is the bond between us that nothing has severed, or can sever — not even time — nor the scorn and coarseness of the world that lives by weight and measure.

Mrs. BLAKE (*aside*). Is this the truth of my own philosophy — or a mad woman's ravings?

JULIA. I know what you are thinking, Sara. The outer world of sensation bears heavily even

on you who have kept your reason enthroned without bowing to the idols of wood and stone. But I am baring my inner life to you — and only telling you what you have often said were possible and reasonable.

Mrs. Blake. You gave us no hint of such depth and wealth of memories in your life, dear. I thought you clever and deep and strong, but *practical.*

Julia. Since I have known you I have been dazed, and more asleep in my waking hours than at night. I have cared to talk of nothing real. Society taught me to chatter of dress and the weather.

Mrs. Blake. Tell me more of this strange, strange thing.

Julia. It is not strange, only as the heart of life is always strange to the outer crust. Everyone has a hidden life that is more real than the life of the senses.

Mrs. Blake. Tell me of your first meeting, dear — if I don't weary you.

Julia. I can't remember so far back as that.

Always, always I knew him. Once we were always together. Then we seemed to separate, wider and wider — the bodies in which we dwelt in the external world walked apart — O, for weary ages, it seemed. And then we met — here, in this very room — in Egypt — only yesterday. That chapter in my life is the most vivid of all. Listen, Sara, I was the guardian of that light — I was the virgin of the temple — and we met, and blended, as two rays unite. And there was a long, long rest — together. . . . It was night to the world, but the brightest Day to life — and when and how it closed, this saddle of the flesh bears too heavily for me to recall. But the Ray split again, and we came back to live with men and search the world over for each other. Perhaps we sinned before this altar — perhaps it was but the way of Things. I am no philosopher, Sara.

Mrs. Blake. In the real world there is no sin. So much my reason tells me. We act thus and so because our lives demand it — and the goal is the same. You have grown faster than the rest of us, Julia —

JULIA. Not faster, but differently. Must every soul be drawn along the same trail? It is enough, I think, that we all suffer. If I have learned a different lesson in the ages, Sara, it is because I have lived much in a perfect light — the light of union. . . . But, O, the darkness that has fallen, and the numbness of my soul in those intervals when I have wandered alone! To know, to realize the ideal — and then to lose! — to grope — (*turns away, in silence*).

Mrs. BLAKE (*after a pause, softly*). There were other lives between this period in Egypt and today?

JULIA. Many of them, I think, but only in the deepest silence of the night can I recall their incidents. In many lands we have lived —

Mrs. BLAKE. And always together?

JULIA. Not always. And those times — those years, those lives, or centuries perhaps, when we were separated — those I do not know; of them I have no memory because they were not real. I am not complete without him. I am but half the Ray. All my real existence has been in him.

Mrs. Blake. That is self-effacement and sounds like the Mussulman's faith, Julia, which says that a woman can only gain heaven by clinging to her husband's robe.

Julia. There could be no heaven apart from him — nor any real life. And what is the end of all living but self-effacement, a forgetting of the ever-changing personal aims in the larger and more lasting aims of the impersonal? Oh, why must every woman walk and talk and think as every other woman? Do I not know my own soul at least better than another may know it? The needs, the cravings of my own nature, should I not know them better than another? . . . All my younger years I spent apart from my surroundings, living far away — with him.

Mrs. Blake. In the past. It were surely wrong to live in the past.

Julia. Not in the past, Sara. Only since our meeting now has the past come before me so vividly. . . . And yet — was it in the future? I can't tell. . . . It was apart, in a different realm — a brighter, fairer world than this. Day and

night my soul mingled with his in this other realm.

Mrs. Blake. Another realm — here, in this Daytime of our life? You have reached it, Julia?

Julia. Oh, the world is very big, very big, Sara — far beyond the city streets, and the hills, and the sea! It has realms of depth and height and brightness. There are other and keener faculties than the senses — you know there are; every woman knows there are. . . . We walked the clouds of this ideal world, hand-in-hand — until the pressure of my home life became too great. As I grew to womanhood I began to leave the cloudlands, and slowly, reluctantly — and O, how bitter was the descent! — I came to busy myself with the tangible and trivial things of life.

Mrs. Blake. You had your part to play in life, like all of us.

Julia. Yes; that is what they all say: my — part — in — life! And everyone knew better what that part was than did I. Well, well, I have played it — or played at it. The world ought to be satisfied now and let me alone.

Mrs. Blake. Forgive me, Julia, I do not mean to add my counsel to that of the world. You had a right to be yourself.

Julia. And the world denied that right at every step of my life. I was molten, and the world an earthen mold into which my surroundings forced me.

Mrs. Blake. The hardest thing in life to learn is to let others alone. It is the last thing that even radicals learn, when they do learn it, that everyone's viewpoint is right — for him or her.

Julia. Because the world doesn't see that the motive of life is a secret known only to each soul. I am told that I must be useful to the world, but how can I be of use to anyone when my life is bent and tortured? Oh, I am tired, tired of it all, and if the prince does not come for me —. But he will come, now that we have found each other in the external world again. He will find me here, waiting —

Mrs. Blake. But — here — why, it isn't proper, dear!

Julia. Not proper that Alexander and I should

be together? Why, then, it's not proper that the sun should warm the earth. I do not *love* this man, dear. It is much more than that. I am just a natural part of him. He is incomplete without me, and I, apart — I am but waiting.

Mrs. Blake. But you married?

Julia (*bitterly*). I did. That was your propriety, your convention. I was weak — and alone. I had to share the sins and griefs of this age, I suppose. I forgot my real life. I was overborne by the set purpose of other people to shape my life for me. I yielded — married. See what it has come to, Sara. I am tired of the mean and petty purposes of life. I wish I could never wake again — or else —

Mrs. Blake. That the prince may carry you away? But there are no princes in real life, dearie — and then, I can't let Alexander come in here and find you like this — can I? Think how contrary it is to our ideas of things.

Julia. But you don't say it would be wrong, Sara — you can't say that. And why should I care for social usages that have done nothing but

drag me down from the ideals of my girlhood — (*Half rising — fearfully*) Sara, dear, Sara — O, you will not keep the prince away from me? He will come — I know he will. You won't, you *won't* lock the door?

Mrs. BLAKE. I — won't — lock — the door. Sleep if you can, dear. Dream as you will. Perhaps you are right. Would that I had strength to guide my own heart. Good-night, dear; I am going. (*As she goes softly toward exit she meets* ALEXANDER *in the doorway. He is surprised to find her there and is about to turn back. She motions to him to remain and points toward couch, then goes out.*)

ALEXANDER (*goes to couch*) I knew I should find you here, Judith.

JULIA. I knew you would come.

ALEXANDER. My queen of the ages! . . . and now . . . ?

JULIA. We must not part again. You will take me away from this life, Alessandro?

ALEXANDER. I must go back to India.

JULIA. Ah, there is poetry in the name for me.

We have lived there — long ago — Alessandro?

ALEXANDER. Long ago, as you say; but now that I hold your hand in mine and once more find my better self in the depths of your eyes, there seems to be no long ago, no past — it is all now — a long vista of the present.

JULIA. Yes; I see it that way — eternity stretching out in a vast circle of brightness . . . broken, spotted with dark blotches.

ALEXANDER. Those spots of darkness — they are the days, or the years, when we were apart.

JULIA. Look steadily at the circle of our lives — see, the dark spots are not so numerous.

ALEXANDER. No — we have been much together, even when separated bodily.

JULIA. And the time will come — the time will come —

ALEXANDER. When all the black spots shall vanish.

JULIA. Do you see that long black gash so close to us?

ALEXANDER. The gulf that we have just crossed?

JULIA. It seems bigger and blacker than all the others.

ALEXANDER. Because it is closer, dear.

JULIA. I was groping in the dark. I must have forgotten you.

ALEXANDER. No, no; it was I who forgot you. I spent a wild year in Europe — and lost you —

JULIA. You could not lose me. It was I that was untrue to my ideal. You were the dream lover of my early days, but —

ALEXANDER. You lived in a world that pillories the dreamer. I know.

JULIA. And all about me were *practical* people. I was scolded, derided. I must lead the strenuous life. I must marry and fill a woman's sphere. I must think of my duty to parents, to society, to posterity — to everything and to everybody except to myself. Myself — I was nothing. My inner, true self — O, it had no existence for those whose fancied duty it was to shape me.

ALEXANDER. I know, Judith, I know. And the world bent your will, as it bent mine for a time.

I yielded — it was that year you married.

JULIA. Yes; and I let myself sink into a life of emotion and sensation. Should I have struggled more — ?

ALEXANDER. No, Life led you true. To struggle, to breast the cosmic tide — that is the real madness, the lure of the petty advantage, from the greater and more enduring harmony. You took on the burden of your time and people, dear woman. It was inevitable. There is no other door that opens to the White Flame — and we still seek it — Judith?

JULIA. Long ago, and often, I besought you to leave me, to seek the Master in the White Flame. But you are gloriously stubborn, Alessandro.

ALEXANDER. You *mean* gloriously true, Judith. But it isn't so. I am only self-seeking. You are the higher part of me. The years have taught me something. Once I essayed to enter alone — I did not know. And Life was kind to me and closed the Door. Now we go together.

JULIA. Be it so . . . as one!

ALEXANDER. As one.

There is a pause in the dialogue.

JULIA. Tomorrow — Alessandro?

ALEXANDER (*struggling*). I must return to my work in India.

JULIA. Alone?

ALEXANDER (*rises — paces the room. He is uncertain — finally, with vehemence*). Who is there to deny us — to say that we should not go together?

JULIA. None.

ALEXANDER. Your husband?

JULIA. There was never a real bond between us, and he has been out of my life for years.

ALEXANDER. Then there is only the social mandate. It cannot count in real life. (*Meditatively*) When men shall frame their customs on natural rules, then shall they bind. (*To* JULIA.) Judith, we go together. We shall find the Way to the White Flame in India.

There is a pause.

JULIA (*slowly — abstractedly*). I knew the prince would come . . . and bear me away . . .

(*The first faint ray of daylight steals into the room and falls aslant the couch. She turns toward the light.*) I see far into the light, Alessandro, and what I see . . . oh, (*slowly*) I see that we shall not find the White Flame in India . . .

ALEXANDER. Not find it? How —

JULIA. Not in India.

ALEXANDER (*goes to her, takes her hand, and tries to see in the faint beam of light the picture that she is evidently struggling to translate.*) Another dark spot — ?

JULIA. I cannot tell. My inner eyes are weak . . . O, I see the White Flame — it does not fuse the flesh. We seek the impossible. Only the souls of men may enter it. . . . (*Turning to him*) O, must you go to India, Alessandro — must you go?

ALEXANDER. My life work is there. I must. . . . I could not hope to gain you by shirking it.

JULIA (*looking back to the light*). The prince leaves me — another gulf yawns. . . . O, for a brighter light, or a keener vision to see beyond it!

ALEXANDER. It shall not be, Judith. We will

take life in our own hands. It shall not be!

JULIA (*sinking back on couch*). What I saw was blurred — and dim. Must it be that we part again?

ALEXANDER. No, no, no! Your eyes say No to me, Judith — your heart beats No! (*stroking her hair*) The scent of your hair quickens my will. You are the Cosmic Woman to me — spirit, soul, and body. Judith, the soul of you lures me as it always did. In the depths of your eyes is the White Flame!

JULIA. Alessandro!

ALEXANDER. What is it we want in life? in eternity?

JULIA. Each other.

ALEXANDER. We have found each other — let us cleave, and bid defiance to fate. We shall go together. . . . See, the light grows stronger. Soon it will be a broad White Flame. Let it find us together!

JULIA (*turns to light again*). Alessandro! (*reaches hand to him*) . . . I see that the White Flame consumes the flesh . . . it — cannot — be —

ALEXANDER. It must be, and it is, Judith. Together — together . . . we go together!

JULIA (*suddenly calm*). It is the flesh that separates us, Alessandro — only the flesh. We shall be together — always — always — in the real world. Our souls shall mingle while our bodies walk apart — for it is the flesh that separates. . . . And, O, how we cling to it — how we cling to it!

ALEXANDER. But why shun it? It is not evil.

JULIA. Not evil, but ever-changing — ever growing old and decaying. It is never for a moment the same. Ties that rest upon it must share its nature; loves that find their expression in it are fleeting. Have not all these ages of bodily death shown us a better joy than the flesh has power to give?

ALEXANDER. They have taught you and me to welcome the Longer Night, for it means our union. . . . But yet . . . we must have our bodies — must dwell in them.

JULIA. No; we choose them. They lure us, and we surfeit in their ever-changing and never-

satisfying affections and emotions — over and over again, we choose the earth lure.

ALEXANDER. You speak the thought of my heart, Judith . . . And yet — there is much to do on the surface of life — many wrongs to redress — burdens to lighten. . . . Some must hold aloft the ideal.

JULIA. And a billion earth-bound souls to do it all — and save the last, none can do for another. We cling to the flesh and its impulses on every pretext — knowing in our hearts its emptiness, even for those we would serve . . .

There is a pause. He is seated on a low stool beside the couch, his head buried in his hands.

ALEXANDER (*rousing himself — speaking softly*). Judith, Judith.

JULIA (*as though waking from a dream*). Who calls? I am Judith. I am here.

ALEXANDER (*slowly*). You — will — go — to India — with — me — Judith?

JULIA. Gladly, loved one, gladly. How could you ask me in so uncertain tone?

ALEXANDER. Judith, you have been away — you have been dreaming.

JULIA (*half rising*). No, I have been awake — oh, so awake! Now I am dreaming; dreaming of my prince who is to carry me off. Go away, dear prince — go away now, and I will sleep and dream of tomorrow and India. (*Sinks back sleepily.*)

ALEXANDER (*rising to go — strokes her hair and kisses her hand*). Tomorrow, then, and India. Good-night, my life. (*Going. As he approaches the door* Mrs. BLAKE *and* Dr. PLODINGER *enter hastily.*) Sh—sh! She is sleeping.

Mrs. BLAKE. Shall we waken her, Doctor?

DOCTOR. There is no alternative; the case is serious.

Mrs. BLAKE (*to* ALEXANDER). Her husband has been stricken. He may not live.

DOCTOR. I do not say that. He may live for years, but he is helpless. It is paralysis. He lies there calling for her, unable to move. We have sent for a nurse. But *she* will want to go to him, I think.

Mrs. BLAKE *rouses* JULIA — *whispers to her as she leads her toward door. Though at first*

dazed, JULIA *quickly comprehends the situation and hurries off, followed by the* DOCTOR.

ALEXANDER (*to himself*). So this was the dark spot which the light revealed to her! (*In torture*) To find — and then to lose ere grasped! . . . Life, your dice are loaded! in your blandest smile there lurks disaster — you cheat! . . . But I'll resist — and stake eternity to rout you!

Mrs. BLAKE (*apart*). Must the grief of another be my only joy? . . . She will remain to nurse her husband while he lives. Alexander cannot delay his departure. He has promised . . . we shall go to Adyar together — and alone! (*Turning*) It is almost daylight, Alexander.

ALEXANDER (*abstractedly*). Yes.

Mrs. BLAKE. There are only a few hours left before our departure, dear. You must have some sleep.

ALEXANDER. I shall not sail now. I have changed my plans.

Mrs. BLAKE. But that is impossible, Alexander. They expect you. What could I tell them? . . . I shall not dare brave their disappointment.

The work depends upon you . . . Oh, you will go, friend — surely?

ALEXANDER (*hesitates — struggling*). Oh, I can't, can't go. Later, perhaps — but not now. (*Vehemently*) No, I can't — I can't. I won't go now.

Mrs. BLAKE. Alexander —

ALEXANDER. See, I am calm — quite calm; but I yield to the stronger tie.

Mrs. BLAKE. Does the flesh bind *you* so?

ALEXANDER. As it does *you* — as it does all of us.

Mrs. BLAKE (*aside*). Oh! . . . (*to Alexander*) And the White Flame you seek in India?

ALEXANDER. It is not there . . . it is not apart from Her!

Enter Dr. PLODINGER. He is resting quietly now. I think we can retire and finish this broken night in slumber.

Mrs. BLAKE. Is he asleep?

DOCTOR. Yes; he will probably sleep during the entire day. It is a bad case. I would rather see him dead. But come, now, I want no more

patients on my hands. There's Mrs. Liston — she is just about collapsed.

Mrs. Blake. Julia, poor girl, I must go to her at once.

Doctor. She is coming here.

Enter Julia, *very pale and weak. She goes to* Alexander.

Julia. You must go to India without me.

Alexander. No — no — !

Julia. Why should we fret and struggle so, when there is all eternity before us! Oh, heart of me! I know that you are my rest, my great peace . . . and *that* is why we must part now. You will go — ?

Alexander. You ask too much.

Julia. No more than I am giving. Who gain are those who give. I shall gain. . . . The grief is in the struggle, my heart.

Alexander. You would darken our path again — project another black spot —

Julia. The black spots are the shadows of our bodies. Oh, we cannot cling to both the soul and body! Let us yield the lesser. I must stay here

now — but you will go, Alessandro? For *our* happiness you will go? . . . And we shall stand in the White Flame together — somewhere — sometime . . . Have faith — and go! (*sinks exhausted on couch.*)

ALEXANDER. I — will — go! . . . (*to himself*) She is sinking — perhaps dying. She cannot stay alone. How can I leave her now? (*Crosses quickly to* Mrs. BLAKE *and speaks hurriedly and low.*) I go to India, but I cannot leave her alone. She is dying, perhaps. *You* will stay and care for her?

Mrs. BLAKE. I — I — Alexander!

ALEXANDER. There is no one else in the world to whom I can appeal —

Mrs. BLAKE. That — is — true. I will stay. (*Goes to* JULIA, *raises her.*) Come, dear tired girl —

There is a strong draught of wind through the room, which slowly pushes open the great doors of the White Portal, through which now streams a broad beam of white morning sunlight, falling not upon the Altar, but aslant to the left.

JULIA *has risen, her hair loose and her robe falling below her naked shoulders. She and* Mrs. BLAKE *are in the center of the beam.*

ALEXANDER *steps from the right of the Portal toward the two women. Soon he and* JULIA *are face to face in the white light. They pause, then make as though to enter the Portal, but the doors slowly swing to, shutting out the light as the curtain descends.*

END OF THIRD ACT

The Fourth Act

ACT FOUR

FRUITION

Time — Early evening three years later.

Scene — In the Garden of Merton-Blake Park. It is an old, old garden, upkept and weed-grown, not entirely, but to a delightful degree, and very picturesque in its wildness and almost perfect naturalness — an acre's clearing and flower-planting, originally, in the midst of perhaps a ten-acre forest. The little oasis was once enclosed by a high iron fence, but the trees and undergrowth have crowded the fence so that its arrow-headed pickets are scarcely visible, except to the left in the background where a large double swinging gate is never closed to the broad and well kept path from the Garden to the mansion.

From the arch over the gate hangs a lantern, already lighted betimes, for the evening shadows are approaching. Either there never was a fence at the upper right hand corner of the Garden, or the trees and bushes mastered it long ago, for even where the narrow path leads into the thicket there is no sign of gate post or fence. Here the bushes and weeds grow up to meet the lower branches of the trees, and one could fancy it the entrance of a primitive

jungle. Everywhere in the Garden are flowers and shrubbery, but the paths are uncalculated and one walks with but scant reference to them.

A little to the right of center is an antique fountain whose stream issues from the water that an old bronze green Venus Anadyomene is wringing from her hair. The coping of the lower basin is weed-choked and moss-covered, but the birds drink and bathe here none the less joyfully. The slender, graceful, simply yet daintily dressed woman who stands by the fountain as the curtain rises, resting a shapely, ringless hand against an arm of the upper basin, seems to be a natural and inevitable part of the dreamy picture.

To the left upper is a large rustic bench strewn with old rose leaves, withered flowers, bits of greenery, and dried leaves. There may be even spiders and caterpillars on it! About the Garden are a couple of tree stumps, an old chair, and a small boulder or two —ample seating capacity, should the ground be damp.

It is a perfect autumn evening, early in October. The ground is strewn with fallen leaves, and the forest trees are donning their gorgeous autumn plumage.

It is nearly sunset as the curtain rises. A shaft of golden light seeps low through the forest just to mingle for the last time with the rival, though less conspicuous radiance of the elegant fragile woman, more ethereal than material, who stands peering into the waters of the fountain.

JULIA (*open letter in her hand*). Oh, that is the secret — "the omnipotent power of non-resistance." Dear heart, how beautifully you have put my thought into words. We must struggle no more against the Life Current. . . . I may not go to you; you may not come to me — while the flesh lasts. . . . For it is the form that darkens the path . . . (*Reads letter*) . . . yes, I know, the way *seems long*. Often I, too, see but darkly, yet I am calm at the center, Alessandro, and if you call your *own* I will *come* — in the time and place that was and is and will be set for the blending. . . .

A VOICE (*faint, distant, almost imperceptible at first*). Judith . . . Judith . . .

JULIA (*startles slightly, then remains motionless in rapt attention*). Ah! . . . Ales . . .

THE VOICE. Judith . . . Judith . . .

JULIA (*very softly, smiling*). Alessandro.

THE VOICE. Judith, I call my own!

JULIA. O gentle soul! the form still casts a shadow . . .

THE VOICE. The shadow passeth!

JULIA. The shadow passeth. O can it be — can it be?

THE VOICE. I call my own in the time and place that *is* . . . that *is* . . .

JULIA (*exultantly*). O hear!

THE VOICE. The shadow passeth . . . (*fading away*) Judith . . . Judith . . .

JULIA. I come . . . The time that *is!* (*Joyfully*) Can it be? . . . At last . . . (*The sunbeam that enveloped her expires. Slowly she folds letter and places it in her bosom.*) The light dazzles . . . the soul leaps. (*Lightly but very quietly she turns and walks away to the woods. Once or twice she pauses as though to catch her breath and rest from physical exertion, showing plainly that her strength is exhausted — a circumstance, however, of which she seems entirely oblivious. As she finally disappears in the woods she repeats softly*) —The shadow passeth . . . the shadow passeth . . .

Enter Mrs. BLAKE, JANET, and Dr. PLODINGER *from the main path. They walk leisurely down the garden and dispose themselves near fountain.*

JANET. Do you know, I can't entirely approve of her. I could just love her to death — I do — but I can't approve.

DOCTOR. Is there a woman's reason back of that, Janet — or a man's?

JANET. Umph! You were not so subtle when you wrote the Physical Basis of Spirituality, Doctor.

DOCTOR (*in mock agony*). My crimes! Will they never down?

Mrs. BLAKE. Janet's tongue is cleverer than her heart, Doctor.

DOCTOR. That's the woman of her. Her disapproval of Mrs. Liston is the strength of the masculine element coloring her views.

JANET. A woman in these days should be more inflexible and determined. She ought to have something to do and a life of her own to live. Julia vacillates too much. She is uncertain. She dreams and never executes. Her emotions sway her —

Mrs. BLAKE. Not always — I am sure — ?

JANET. You didn't let me finish, Sara. Her

emotions control her one day, she is all mind and intellect the next day, and on a third day she has reached a height of — Oh, what shall I call it?

DOCTOR. Call it spirituality, if you want to. That means anything you want it to mean.

JANET. Well, she is poised and strong on this day and gains a depth and loftiness of perception that draws her to the angels and opens the door of heaven to those about her. You couldn't hold a thought of pettiness or meanness in the same atmosphere with her on that day . . . or on any day, for that matter. But you know what I mean. She is in the clouds on that day and you just have to go with her.

Mrs. BLAKE. Why, Janet, you're talking sheer poetry.

JANET. Of course, Sara, and I can't help it. A clod could not associate with that fragile bundle of emotions, intellect, and spirituality, as I have for the past two years, and not have some poetry driven into his soul.

DOCTOR. Soul, eh? that sounds well from Janet.

JANET. Soul is poetry when I speak it. And Julia — she is just a soul poem, with a little flesh and some clothes about her.

DOCTOR. Far too little of the former, I am afraid. But tell us, is there a fourth day?

JANET. There is — a day of apathy — when the spirit, will, emotions, and mind, all are gone, and she is only a tired, irritable woman — nerves, you know. I just long to love her on those days, but she hides herself.

DOCTOR. Ah, that is her real saintship.

JANET. How so?

DOCTOR. That she hides herself on that fourth day — the day most women choose to inflict themselves on others.

JANET. Julia Liston couldn't inflict herself at any time, on anybody.

DOCTOR. I don't believe she could — but Janet doesn't approve of her entirely, remember, and I'll tell you why, Mrs. Blake.

Mrs. BLAKE. Do, Doctor. I've been away so long I hardly know my own household.

DOCTOR. Judged entirely from the feminine

side, Mrs. Liston is an ideal, but she hasn't enough of the masculine element in her to make a good suffragette. (JANET *is about to interpose*) Oh, I'm not objecting to a little — or even much — masculinity in women. I take them as I find them and try to explain them. Mrs. Liston is a rara avis in these days — yes, wisely so I have no doubt, for the period is a strenuous one, and the energy of men is vamparized by a commercialism that has run to graft, so that men are no longer the thinkers of the world.

JANET. I applaud you (*clapping her hands softly*)

DOCTOR. But Mrs. Liston is more nearly the pure feminine type than I have ever met before. Whatever of the masculine element she has is subjective. Spiritually she is deep and strong, intellectually keen and subtle, but externally she is — well, observe her — she is sympathetic, generous, kindly, lovable — but weak.

JANET. That man is in love with her.

DOCTOR. Quite true, Janet. That is a cosmic necessity. Did you ever see a man within her scope who was not in love with her?

JANET. He wouldn't be a man — just a ninny. She is fine!

DOCTOR. Fine is a good word there, Janet. She is finely woven, and of a little finer material, I often think, than the rest of us.

Mrs. BLAKE. I am sure of it, Doctor. (*To* JANET) Did she think of going out to India when her husband died?

JANET. Yes, and ever since — on those emotional days. I don't want to lose her, and I don't think she could stand the long journey —

DOCTOR. You are wrong there. She could stand anything her heart and mind were set on.

JANET. But it always did puzzle me why she didn't go when she was free.

DOCTOR. I suppose there was no necessity of her going to India. She and Alexander have annihilated distance in what is to them a very real sense. They are much together, I fancy.

Mrs. BLAKE. Does Alexander write often?

JANET. No. And usually she puts his letters under her pillow unread. She knows what's in them — she says.

DOCTOR. You almost forgot that qualifying clause, Janet.

JANET. Oh, I make an exception of this case. Julia Liston can set aside the laws of the universe, I am about convinced.

Mrs. BLAKE. No need for that, Janet.

DOCTOR. Just grasp them and use them.

JANET (*drily*). Yes, as you say in the Physical Limits.

Mrs. BLAKE (*guardedly*). Does she know, I wonder, that Alexander has been ill with the fever?

JANET. I have scarcely talked with her for a week — she has been so much alone — off there in the woods most of the time — and there has been no letter for a fortnight. How long has he been ill?

Mrs. BLAKE. There was a cable in town awaiting me yesterday. It is two days now since he was stricken. (*Very slowly*) It seems there is not much hope of his recovery.

JANET. You never told us!

DOCTOR (*reproachfully*). Mrs. Blake — !

Mrs. Blake (*looking around, speaking more guardedly*). I tried to forget it, to hide it as deeply as I could, to put the bare thought of it out of my mind until after I had seen Julia. I should not have mentioned it now —

Doctor. But you will have to tell her?

Mrs. Blake. I think not. I saw Alexander at Adyar about a month ago. I am satisfied their understanding is very complete, and that any news I should convey to her by word or thought would be unnecessary and merely confuse her. She will know in her — in their — own way.

Doctor. I believe it. And the least physical or emotional disturbance of her would prove fatal, I am sure. (*Musingly*) Sometimes I think they ought to have married. I believe I should have written to Alexander insisting upon it, only that Janet proved such a tender and competent nurse. For two years now there has been no reason why they should not have wed.

Mrs. Blake. Every reason in the world — for them — or at least the very best reason. They fear a breach in their perfect spiritual union and know that an emotional or physical expression of

it would cause such a breach — however temporary.

DOCTOR. But that is repression, isn't it? I'm only asking to strengthen my own views, you know. Isn't it a repression and a pervasion of their natures — as the world would say?

Mrs. BLAKE. That might be true of another couple, but not of them. No, they are only obeying the strongest urge of their natures.

DOCTOR. An urge, or desire, created by and growing out of their recollection of many previous lives' experiences —

Mrs. BLAKE. Yes, and I think they are wise to follow it. Rather would it be a perversion for them to defeat or delay this greater desire of their lives by yielding to the passing emotion . . . But she is the stronger. She holds him to the permanent, and he —

DOCTOR. Well, and he?

Mrs. BLAKE. It seems almost indelicate for us to speak of these things, doesn't it? (JANET *shrugs her shoulders and the* DOCTOR *is silent.*) He, well he is madly, grandly proud of her for

the very thing in her which his more vigorous personality sometimes tries to overcome. At first he was in despair at her not coming out to India when she was free. But now — oh, I think these two have found the Way — *their* Way, let us say.

DOCTOR. And when you put it like that, "*their* Way," you have disarmed all criticism. (*Slyly*) Now even Janet —

JANET. Yes, "*their* Way" ends all discussion. I used to think everybody's way should be the same — but that was when I was reading the Physical Limits of Spirituality.

DOCTOR. I groan. If you could only forget.

JANET. I have almost forgotten. Julia should be here with us. It is nearly dark. I am going to find her and bring her to hear the Doctor's wit.

Mrs. BLAKE. Do, dear; bring her if you can.

Exit JANET.

DOCTOR. I didn't want to alarm Janet, but — Mrs. Liston is — well, I hardly think that she can be with us much longer.

Mrs. BLAKE. Yes, I could see the change. Can you do nothing for her, Doctor?

DOCTOR. I hardly expected such a question from you, Mrs. Blake.

Mrs. BLAKE. Thank you Doctor, for correcting me. It was a slip of the tongue, an echo of my external world life. Of course there is nothing the matter with her.

DOCTOR. It is the spirit refining the flesh — the soul escaping, forgetting, the earth lure.

Mrs. BLAKE. Slowly and surely she is dying . . . ?

DOCTOR. If we must use that word. Surely, but not slowly.

Mrs. BLAKE. And I was right, wasn't I, in withholding the news of Alexander's sudden illness? She will know.

DOCTOR. She does know, but in a different way. Spiritually you could tell her nothing, and the nerves and emotions must not be shocked.

Mrs. BLAKE. We must forget it entirely, while she is here.

DOCTOR. By all means. She could feel it in our thoughts, plainly. Did she inquire about him?

Mrs. BLAKE. No — but then I have scarcely

seen her alone yet. Ah, there they come.

Enter JANET (*with* JULIA. *The latter is flushed with the exertion of walking, but is bright and cheerful.* JANET *leads her to a seat*). There, dear; I walked you too fast. But I was afraid you would miss some of the Doctor's wit.

JULIA (*lightly*). Sara dear — and Doctor — don't scold me, please, for my unkindness in keeping away. I meant to come earlier, but the moments fly so.

DOCTOR. Didn't your ears tingle? We were talking of you.

JULIA. What a doleful time you must have had. I didn't miss so much, then, as I thought.

JANET. Oh, but it wasn't all about you. The Doctor gave us a learned discourse on the Physical Limits, you know.

DOCTOR. She can *not* be truthful. Mrs. Liston, as friend and physician I am bound to warn you against too close association with such a thankless liar —

JULIA (*rising and going to* JANET). Yes, I know, Doctor. She is awful (*to* JANET) sweet.

But I have a perverted love for her (*laughs and puts arm about* JANET).

DOCTOR. Oh, very well, but I have warned you.

Mrs. BLAKE. Couldn't we have tea out here, Janet — and another light?

JANET. Just the thing. I'll go and ring (*Goes left to main path. At the gate she is met by a* MESSENGER, *who refuses to be halted*) What is it — tell me? Don't disturb them.

MESSENGER. I have to deliver it directly to Mrs. Merton-Blake in person (*hurries on down toward the little group who are conversing quietly, despite* JANET'S *further efforts to stop him, and calls out lustily*) — Cablegram for Mrs. Merton-Blake. Cable from India!

Mrs. BLAKE (*turns in dismay and tries to head off any further demonstration*). Be still —

JULIA (*suddenly alert*). Ah! . . . the time that is . . .

MESSENGER. It is marked Rush and Important ma'am.

Mrs. BLAKE. Oh, be still, be still!

MESSENGER. Yes ma'am. Charges all paid ma'am. Sign here ma'am.

JULIA *is exhausted by the sudden shock. She is alone for a moment,* Dr. PLODINGER *having gone forth to thrash, tip, and expunge the noisy intruder. Two of these he does with alacrity and returns to find that* JULIA *has silently fallen to the ground.*

Mrs. BLAKE (*already beside her*). Darling girl!

JULIA (*faintly*). I walked so much today.

DOCTOR (*takes* JULIA *in his arms and is about to carry her indoors*). You'll be all right in a few moments.

JULIA. Please let me stay out of doors, Doctor.

DOCTOR. Quite right, Mrs. Liston (*carries her to the rustic bench. She is too weak to sit up.*)

JANET. Shall I fetch some brandy or cordial, Doctor?

DOCTOR. I think not, Janet.

JULIA (*very laboredly, but with an effort at sprightliness*). Thank you Doctor, — and you, too, Janet. Oh, what dear good friends you have been to me . . .

JANET *sits on the end of the bench, and* Dr.

PLODINGER *and* Mrs. BLAKE *stand at opposite sides of it. They are silent, seeming to realize the futility of saying anything and the inappropriateness of small talk. They have forgotten the cablegram which remains unopened in* Mrs. BLAKE'S *hand.*

JULIA. Sweet life! I am coming! . . . The shadow passeth . . . Sweetheart, now life begins (*raising her hands*) the shadow passeth!

It has become quite dark, save for the lantern over the gate, whose dull rays show plainly the white raised hands of JULIA.

Now a shaft of moonlight reaches through the forest trees and falls aslant the fountain. This broadens out and grows denser. It is hazy and opaque, but white, like a low fog at sea when the sun is trying to pierce it.

From the right a VOICE *is heard* — Judith!

JULIA (*very faintly*). I am Judith . . . I am coming, beloved.

The faint outlines of a figure is seen emerging from the center of the moonbeam in the trees. It is ALESSANDRO, *garbed as in Act. I. It speaks* — Judith, the long night is over.

JULIA (*can be dimly seen in the lantern light to half rise*) Alessandro . . . And the White Flame! It shall fuse!

ALESSANDRO. There is no whiter flame than thy pure soul!

JULIA (*exultantly*). And the Master — there! (*points to trees where now is seen the outlines of the* TEACHER) Alessandro (*tries to rise as though to go to him*) I come (*falls back gently.*)

The figure of ALESSANDRO *vanishes.*

The light grows more intense, but remains opaque so that outlines in it are not sharp and distinct.

For an instant all outlines are obliterated, then slowly reappears the TEACHER *in the background, his hand outstretched, and presently, before him stand two nude figures, male and female. It is all very dim and shadowy, and the apparition lasts only a moment, but it is quite clear that the figures are nude — and unashamed.*

TEACHER (*in voice plain and clear*). In the White Flame I come. In its fusing rays shall ye blend. I greet ye at the Portal, as all are greeted

when they willingly sever the last deceiving ties of flesh.

The light burns still fiercer, and again all outlines are expunged. It clears again, becoming almost transparent, and first is seen, in heroic size the Portal from the Temple chamber as in Act I, over which hangs the White Light. The doors of the Portal are open and the TEACHER *emerges a step or two to meet a single white-robed* FIGURE *that now stands where stood the nude couple.*

THE FIGURE (*advancing a step*). I would enter. (*The voice is not* ALEXANDER'S, *but another entirely — a stronger, deeper, and more musical voice.*)

TEACHER. What seekest thou?

THE FIGURE. The Higher Way.

TEACHER. It lies not on the path of personal advantage.

THE FIGURE. I seek not that which all shall not gain.

TEACHER. Nor couldst thou achieve it. Across this threshold lies not a paradise of ease, but the choice of oblivious sleep till the Night of Earth's

Day . . . or, again thou canst relinquish . . .

THE FIGURE. Relinquish . . . to what purpose?

TEACHER. To suffer still with men, and through their suffering, in their griefs and pains, to offer cooling cups to parched lips — and tear aside the veils of matter that hide their vision from the Perfect Light. . . . 'Tis for thee to choose.

The light has grown softer and more diffused, until now the entire Garden is in moonlight, showing dimly the little group by the rustic bench.

A very powerful White Light issues from over the Portal and casts a ray from the TEACHER *to the* FIGURE *in front of him.*

THE FIGURE. I relinquish.

At once, commencing even before he speaks, the FIGURE *is surrounded by a delicate lilac-tinted aura which quickly deepens to transparent purple.*

TEACHER. Hail, to a Helper of men!

END OF THE PLAY

The Last Word

The Last Word

¶ That THE WHITE FLAME shall be appraised, if at all, as an idealistic play intentionally unincumbered by symbolism (or indigent of it, as you will) is my hope, and the chief reason for this *additamentum*. With the engrossing problems of the market-place, or of social and civic life: with the passional and legal relations of the sexes, as with the mystifying, when not equivocal trend of symbology, this play has scant or no concern. Is there not already a sufficiency of plays motived on these problems and conditions? And if there be need of more, are not the masters, Shaw and Maeterlinck, still producing? Is it presumptuous for me to use these names on this page? How greater, then, would be the impertinence for me to seek to enter their fields? — and certainly quite foreign to my inclination and way of thought.

¶ The ultimate good of life — or any satisfying and lasting good — is not to be found on its surface. Only the ideal is true and of power to confer comparatively permanent happiness or peace. The themes of this play reach beyond the surface of life — where there is room for ideals and for a rational optimism. Why are all the logical plays, of life and of the stage, tragedies when not comedies? Because they deal only with the emotional nature, which is but the froth on the real CUP of Life. And why may not art concern itself with something other than emotions?

¶ As to the ideals of this play. Dare they be considered as possibilities — however distant? Which inquiry leads to this comment on its controlling theme: That Reincarnation, viewed from the facet of the personal workaday consciousness, is rather a beautiful possibility than a present actuality. For if we do not consciously remember at least the important outlines of our previous lives — which now we do not — then to all intents and purposes we have not Reincarnated. The moral of which is, of course, as Dr. Plodinger hints to Janet Hards, that so long as our attention is focussed upon those things which in their very nature are temporary, so long we will not remember the permanent.

¶ Nothing within man's scope is entirely permanent, but that Individual part of him which does Reincarnate thru many lives and ages, is relatively permanent, and in so much as one's attention should be focussed upon it normally and rationally, to that extent would he remember its experiences. And whether he remember them or not they none the less make him what he is, as to inherent qualities and tendencies.

¶ As to the final theme of the play, Renunciation, it is presented here not as the horrible and torturing thing that Judaism pictures it in nailing a living man to a cross, but in the natural and harmonious manner of that far more philosophical religion of Asia in which the idea of Reincarnation is ever uppermost. If to "be good" must lead to torture, then why be "good"? Well, we are not very noticeably "good" — we Christians. To renounce should be to gain a greater joy — else why renounce? Herbert Spencer's logic of Enlightened Self Interest is

more in accord with Brahamanism than with Judaism, surely — or with Buddhism than with Christianity, let us say. In the former the highest ideal of individual good is never at variance with the greatest common good: to renounce is but to grasp a Fairer Rose. In the latter individual happiness and the general welfare are forever at sword point: to renounce is to put on the Crown of Thorns. It is the difference between the Oriental and the Occidental, between the Philosopher and the Puritan. The difference between tweedledee and tweedledum, do I hear one say? I think not, but rather an important and fundamental difference of temperament that enables the Oriental always to be philosophically optimistic and leads the Occidental either to be inanely cheerful or thoughtfully morose.

¶ The ethereal, or spiritual, blending of the sexes is an idea that wormed itself into the play with no forethought or planning of mine. It presented itself logically, however, and seemed to appeal as an artistic solution of a problem to which there is no physical answer.

¶ You have a man and a woman — if you are writing a play — and you lead them through various, and as you may think ingenious, vicissitudes and events, pitting your poor wit against Life's loaded dice to invent a situation unknown to actuality. In this you fail, of course, miserably fail, as every reader or spectator who happens to be living a play of his own knows full well. But readers and playgoers are indulgent. Knowing a story of their own more vivid, more peculiar, more unique, and with stronger and more startling situations than any that you can invent, they yet applaud — if the deneoument be but logical, flow-

ing as a natural sequence of the lines and the situations. It is in the finale that their interest lies, and to read it or see it they endure with much patience all the acts and scenes that precede it. For their own plays are unfinished, and they are wondering about that last act. Whether it be comedy or tragedy, in Life's plays and stories there is always a survivor or two undisposed of — so long as there are readers or playgoers. These smile at your cunningest inventions (if they be twenty or over, say) and breathe hard only on the final curtain.

¶ Bearing this circumstance in mind, I threw invention to the winds in building this play and worked for an ending that should be logical and beautiful. Perhaps it is neither. I am stating the aim merely.

¶ But this man and woman with whom you start out — what are you going to do with them in the last act? Cut off the story in the middle with marriage, legal or actual, if you are writing a comedy. Kill them, or their lives' happiness, if a tragedy. There is no other course on the stage. Is there in life? Not if the play is compounded of emotions and the actors are strong men and women.

¶ Are there other possibilities in life or on the stage — possibilities neither pathetic nor gloomy? I have tried to suggest, in THE WHITE FLAME, that there might be. But such possibility will not be found on the physical surface of life. None of the real problems of life can be answered from a physical basis — least of all this question of the relation of the sexes — because it, and life, and all life's problems are far deeper than the physical.

¶ It is a very old idea, this of the sexes finally blending to produce the androgyne — the perfect human. It is

hidden in many an ancient and medieval symbol, buried at the root of every known religion of savage or civilized man, and was seriously considered by every speculative philosophy up to several centuries after the Council of Constantinople elided Reincarnation from the Christian dogma. And it may be true. Who among us is so wise as to *know* that it isn't?

¶ It will not stand the scientific test of Experience — nor will Reincarnation, or anything else that cannot be weighed and measured. But man cannot live on weight and measure — nor by bread alone. Forever the human heart soars beyond science, else would science never advance. Nor will even the mind of man stay chained to sensation's physical evidence. However, it can be stated in terms of the scientific dogma. Thus, we can say that sexuality is a matter of polarization, and is expressed, in one way or another, thruout the universe. The seeking of the positive life current for its harmonious negative current, and vice versa, is the world's unrest mainly, and obtains on all planes of life in all unisexual creatures — and in all the currents and forces of the world. It is the secret of electricity, the motive of chemical attractions, the meaning of life to adolescence, the unrest of maturity, and the solace of age. In the human family at present it is chiefly expressed on the physical and emotional planes — but not always, nor entirely, nor at its best and highest and keenest vibration.

¶ " To mesh my soul within a woman's hair," wrote Oscar Wilde in anguish — and to avoid so vulgar and commonplace a fate, alas! he did worse, for that he and his time could not see further into life. Might not the converse of

his anguish be possible — in fiction, if not in life? Could a man tangle his life in a woman's soul? Is the thought too remote for even a play? Well, it is a beautiful thought, is it not? Could such a thing have happened to Wilde would literature have been poorer? I cannot think so, for though the tarnishment of his soul became as floating ambergris on the sea of art, the stilling of his sex nature, the tranquillity of his emotions, might have left him free to produce even a greater art and to express profounder truths than he did.

¶ That man was originally androgynous there is every reason to believe — every reason except the physical evidence demanded by materialistic science. And whatever was shall be again, not exactly, but analogously. In time to come — oh, a very long time, of course — man will again take on the complete human form. The Superman, if you will, shall become androgynous, recombining both the negative and positive life forces in one form.

¶ That will not be a physical form, however. I do not understand the ancient records to depict man as a physical androgyne — that is a too literal rendering for me, and not a logical supposition. But man was originally an ethereal or " spiritual " being, at which time he was androgynous — and propagated his kind by mental creation. There are tales of the " mind-born sons." As man's form grew less ethereal, as he was about to " descend into matter," there came the division of the sexes, the negative and the positive human forces separated and each clothed itself in an individual form.

¶ Humanity is losing its grossness, the human form its denseness. The long cycle of human evolution again

curves toward the etherealization of the human form. And when the race as a whole shall put off its garb of physical substance then shall man rebecome bisexual. Then shall man be outwardly and consciously that God which in essence and possibility he now is — and the evolutionary ultimate for the race, is always a present possibility for the individual who is intelligent enough to foresee it and strong enough to grasp and fit himself into it.

¶ Briefly stated, that is the theory, fable, fact, philosophy, or fancy upon which logically rests the hypothesis of affinities. And upon this, and its corollary idea of Reincarnation, is woven the fabric of THE WHITE FLAME.

LUKE NORTH

JAN 24 1910

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